

FORUM

*Internal Journal of
the S.P.G.B. — 6d.*
No. 21 JUNE, 1954

THE WORKERS — MUST THEIR CONDITIONS WORSEN?

Horatio in the May issue of *Forum* uses "The law of the falling tendency of the rate of profit" and "Relative Surplus value" in support of his views that under Capitalism the conditions of the working class steadily worsen. I do not think these two propositions support Horatio's contentions.

It is indisputable of course that the increase in the organic composition of capital, shows a steady rising trend. Constant capital, i.e. machines and raw material, has proportionately grown greater in the total capital advanced than variable capital (wage bills). It is in the $C/C+V$ equation surplus value can only be made from V , that any increase in the ratio of C to V must lead to a fall in the rate of profit, all other conditions being equal.

But they never really are, as Marx was quick to point out. Changes in the organic composition of capital are generally accompanied by increased productivity of labour, i.e. an increase in the rate of surplus value. This operates as a check on the falling rate of profit. Thus if in any undertaking, V dropped to half of its original amount and C increased proportionately, but the rate of exploitation was doubled, then the rate of profit would remain the same.

If then we can reasonably assume that generally, changes in the organic composition of capital are accompanied by changes in the rate of surplus value, then the trend of the rate of profit will itself be indefinite. The only way the rate of profit would fall is if the rate of variable capital to the total outlay suffered a greater percentage decrease than the percentage increase in the rate of surplus value.

Now it can be argued that changes in C will be so much greater than changes in the rate of surplus value that increases in the latter will fail to act as an effective counter

agent to the falling tendency of the rate of profit, which will show a consistent downward trend. This would of course compel the capitalist to feverishly intensify the exploitation of workers and further to try and depress wages if only to retard the falling rate of profit. If of course this was true then the tendency of the falling rate of profit would lead to a steady deterioration in working class standards of living.

Such a view of the falling tendency of the rate of profit seems to me to be untenable. It is true that the growth of machinery per worker has increased very rapidly although not perhaps so rapidly as some are inclined to think. But the growth in the organic composition of capital is not merely a technical development, but a value expression. Side by side with the growth of the physical magnitude of constant capital has gone an increasing cheapening of the elements of constant capital due to increased labour productivity. Thus although the value of constant capital increases it does not increase at the same rate as its physical volume. Marx of course deals with the cheapening elements of constant capital as a counter tendency to the falling rate of profit.

Marx also mentions the reserve army of labour operating as a check to the falling rate of profit. First because as a competitive factor on the labour market it tends to depress wages and so raise the rate of surplus value. Secondly, where unemployment is considerable it stimulates the setting up of new industries with a low organic composition of capital and consequently a comparatively high rate of profit.

To put the matter into better perspective it would be true to say that Marx saw tendencies and counter tendencies in capitalism. It is from this conflict of opposing forces that the general law of motion of Capitalism

emerges. To the question which tendency is likely to prevail, Marx gave no clear indication. To have dealt with any of these tendencies like the falling rate of profit in abstraction, divorced from the actual existing conditions of a class society, would I think, have been foreign to his method.

This of course has not prevented some marxist writers from giving a mechanistic twist to the falling rate of profit, picturing it as operating in a continuous downward trend to reach a point where the system would cease to work.

As for the question of relative surplus value. Marx's own view can best be expressed in his own words—"Hand in hand with the increasing productivity of labour goes as we have seen the cheapening of the labour, therefore a higher rate of surplus value but even when wages are rising, the latter never rise proportionally to the productive power of Labour" This seems to suggest that the workers can improve their living standards though not to the extent that they are able to reap the entire benefit of their increased productivity. But even if this is so one finds it hard to accept the fact that this is tantamount to a law of increasing misery.

Moreover, how much the workers can obtain when there is an expanding period of capitalist investment and how much is standard of living cannot be decided by purely incorporated as a permanent feature of their theoretical considerations, but on the actual strength of class relations, viz., in the workers case, the power of the Trades Unions.

Again it cannot be deduced that increase in the organic composition of capital has as its immediate aim increased productivity. In other words in any period of extended capital expansion employers tend to meet less and less reserves of 'cheap labour'. The capitalist attempts to meet the situation by an increase of machinery (constant capital).

The opinions expressed in this journal are those of the individual contributors, and are not to be taken as the official views of the party

This is actuated by a relative scarcity in the labour market. This leads to a fall in the rate of profit but it does not necessarily follow that the capitalist is compensated by an increase in the rate of surplus value. It could involve a loss. Neither does it follow that any increase in constant capital with its accompanying productivity produces results wholly favourable to the employer. Working class resistance to intensification of the labour process may be a considerable factor in the situation.

I am not of course saying that increases in working class standards are not subject to grave restrictions. When the price of labour power is such as to threaten profits to any great extent then the capitalists will seek to increase the organic composition of capital as an answer. This means workers will be put off, unemployment will grow and as a competitive factor it will serve to depress wages. Thus wages are regulated between the upper and nether millstones of this process. It is this which makes it impossible for workers to absorb in wage increases the whole of surplus value.

I think it better in order to understand the economic function of capitalism to regard the falling rate of profit and relative surplus value not as isolated features, but as related parts of the general law of capitalism, i.e. the law of capitalist accumulation. That is the need of the capitalist to expand his capital by converting a part—the greater part—of surplus value into additional capital. It is this that gives rise to a demand for labour and with it a rise in wages. This leads to a reduction in the rate of profit. The capitalist then seeks through the introduction of machinery to offset this. It is this which in my opinion puts the increased tendency of a rising organic composition of capital in its proper perspective. Whether this action will tend to restore the rate of profit or further depress it cannot be proved on general grounds.

One thing we can say is that a theory of increasing working class misery cannot be decided by appeals to the falling tendency of the rate of profit considered in vacuo but is a result of a highly complex interacting situation.

Just one point further. Horatio's statement that crises are caused by the inability of workers to buy back the goods they produce fills me with grave concern. I propose in a later issue to deal with what I think is the Marxian view of crises.

I am glad, however, to discuss these differences with Horatio because such discussion makes for theoretical clarity which is important for a party such as ours.

E.W.

POLEMICS OR PROPAGANDA?

S.R.P.'s article 'A Policy on Socialism' purports to deal with my earlier criticism of A.A.N.'s article 'Class Struggle and the S.P.G.B.'. As S.R.P. has reduced my article to six points I will answer his criticisms accordingly.

(1) Members will notice that he avoids dealing with the essence of my original statement which is "Do all people have to understand Socialism prior to its establishment?" Instead he poses an academic question asking me to show "in what economic circumstances people cannot understand Socialism". My answer is that people cannot understand Socialism in the economic circumstances of Feudalism.

(2) My original statement claimed that a struggle existed over the product of labour, which I called 'property', between Trade Unions and employers. Whilst Trade Unions argued to the degree of the division of property, Socialists sought to dispossess the property owners and introduce common property. Surely the meaning is clear. Again, S.R.P. alters the meaning of the words, equates common ownership with 'no ownership', and by some process proceeds to accuse me of saying that Trade Unions propose to abolish property by degrees. (I am completely puzzled by the statement "There are no degrees in property, which consists in relationships that are either supported or opposed"). I take it that the product of labour will exist under Socialism.

(3) All Parties I named in the original article call themselves 'Socialist' and sincerely believe they are. They work for their objective which, due to a faulty analysis of the forces of Capitalism and its contradictions, is not Socialism at all, and usually turns out to be Nationalisation. They cannot work for Socialism because of ignorance and not intention. A logical inference to be drawn from S.R.P.'s remarks in this connection is that these Parties could work for Socialism but do not.

(4) The answer to this point brings the word 'emancipate' into dispute. Again, I stated clearly what I meant. Emancipation, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, means setting free from slavery or legal disabilities. Both descriptions fit the modern working class perfectly, and not the capitalist

class. If Socialism will not emancipate workers in this way, what other way?

All this must seem horribly mundane to S.R.P., who seems to use the word 'emancipate' in a religious or moral sense. Perhaps he will inform us in simple terms how Socialism will emancipate the capitalist in particular. Will it free him from slavery or legal disability? The statement "Socialism is a dire necessity only for Socialists not for workers or capitalists" is rather mystifying. Surely Socialism is a dire necessity for the non-Socialist working class—it is not a dire necessity for the capitalist class. In fact it is not a necessity at all for them.

On this issue, S.R.P. and others who hold similar views, have refrained from giving reasons why Socialism will benefit the capitalist, or alternatively, showing what problems the capitalist suffers from. Surely we are entitled to know them. The capitalist appears to have been buried under the heading of 'humanity and mankind'—let's have him out and discuss his particular problems. S.R.P. claims that no capitalist can identify himself with working class interests—how about Frederic Engels?

(5) I realised when I made the statement "When Socialism is established nobody will know what it will look like, neither will anyone care apart from some S.P.G.Bers" that it was likely to shock S.R.P. and many others. I did add, of course, that we would be in a position to know more about production, etc. I make no apology for this seeming sacrilege, but S.R.P. should not presume that I have given no thought to the question, nor listened to discussions, nor read the works of William Morris. This phantom appeared in its modern form six years ago, and never once have I heard or read, anything that the Party could usefully use in its propaganda.

Surely the onus is on S.R.P. and others to put forward a description of Socialism and what it will look like. They should not be deterred or put off by members' hostility. As Socialists we are interested in obtaining Socialism as soon as possible, and any asset to our propaganda would be more than welcome.

My own view is that the very nature of the question 'Socialism—what will it look like?'

is an absurdity. You can only describe social systems, including Capitalism and Socialism, from their economic basis, the relations of people to the means of production. In short, the description contained in our object.

S.R.P. would describe Socialism as 'the establishment of social harmony', which leaves us as wise as ever. He is also not quite sure on whether mass production will take place or not. A number of other individuals have made alarming speculations, and it is no exaggeration to say that during the past two years polemics have been taking place between individuals who are supposed to agree basically. I am interested in propaganda and not polemics. If S.R.P. wants to admonish me and my analysis let him do so in a clear statement showing what remarkable advantages we will gain by indulging in this new form of propaganda. Illustrations please.

(6) Despite what S.R.P. says, all the Party offers is democratic control and common ownership. If S.R.P. decides to refer to these as vague ideals he must have something else in mind apart from Socialism, because this is the basis of Socialism. The statement "Labour, Communist, I.L.P. etc., all offer to re-create the world with these vague ideals" (referred to above) leads me to the conclusion that it would do S.R.P. no harm to do a bit of analysing himself, and find out what these political parties really stand for.

I repeat the challenge to S.R.P. and others—show us the problems from which the capitalist suffers, and let us have the treatise on Socialism and what it will look like.

D'ARCY

* * *

EDITORIAL NOTE

We have received many articles criticising Turner's article, some of which seem to us to repeat the same points, and practically in the same words, as articles which have already appeared. We are therefore not printing them in this issue. If any writer feels that he wishes his article to appear in any case, he should let us know, and it will appear in the next issue.

We must apologise for two printer's errors in last month's issue. The title of the front page article should have been "Cybernetics and Society", and not "Cybernectics and Society". The author's name was ROBERT.

SOCIALISTS AND PARLIAMENT

Peter Newell will not find an answer to his question "Is Parliament an Instrument of Emancipation?" (FORUM, Dec—Jan) by exploring the evolution of Parliament, nor by considering the views of Marx, Engels, Morris and others. These views, even if correct, can only apply to certain conditions of the past. He will find the answer to his question by examining the Parliament of today, and having clear ideas about emancipation.

Although Parliament is of recent growth, there has not been any stage in social evolution which did not have laws of some sort which were enforced by sanctions of some kind. We, who wish to establish the common ownership and democratic control of the means of living in the interest of all, must needs make a law to this effect.

The right to make laws is only for those who can enforce them. The British Parliament i.e. the House of Commons (the Lords and Monarchy can be ignored) is representative of the whole community and has the sole right of making laws—other people can make law only where Parliament authorises. This Parliament is neither capitalist nor socialist, but merely a machine for making what laws we like and as fast as we like.

A party wishing to control this Parliament need not fill all 625 seats, but only enough to have a substantial majority. A Socialist Party will get a majority when there will be a small section of the working class still hostile to Socialism because it does not understand, and a large section of the capitalists class hostile because it does. These two sections together will, however, be only a minority of the whole community, and against this minority the first socialist legislation may have to be enforced—perhaps more against ex-capitalists than against ex-workers. Parliament can change a person's economic status in a moment, but it cannot undo the mental make-up of a lifetime in a moment. And the one thing a Socialist Parliament will never be able to do is to compensate the capitalist class.

* * *

Newell confesses that he does not know how the present powers of government will be "converted into an agent of emancipation"

and no Party member has ever told him. No Party member has ever told me either, but I have never had to ask.

Now, Newell's idea of establishing Socialism is that when a majority of mankind (not a majority of *workers*) register their desire for Socialism (presumably by writing 'Socialism, S.P.G.P. across their ballot papers) they will take over the means of production, produce articles for use, take over the State, and immediately disband those "parts which were only necessary for Capitalism". One of the "parts of Capitalism" to be immediately disbanded is to be the police. But he is going to keep the Labour Exchange a little longer "for the use of those people wishing to find useful work to do". That will presumably be for the people who have not been working usefully nor have felt the urge to do so but who, upon revolution day, will undergo a conversion and so register for useful work.

Keeping the Labour Exchange is a good idea, but what about the idlers who do not undergo this conversion? What if none of the idlers undergoes this conversion, which, at the moment, is only Newell's conception?

* * *

Let me point out that a Socialist Revolution will not arise from a problem of production, but from one of distribution, i.e. a working-class poverty problem. Therefore, the fundamental task of a Socialist Party in control is to solve the distribution problem. This means organising distribution on socialist lines, and leaving the powers of production to carry on exactly as before—except, of course, that they will be requisitioned. As socialist distribution reveals deficiencies of certain articles (and the signs will soon show) so will the powers of production be adjusted accordingly.

To do all this, the Socialist Party will require machinery for making rules and amending them as conditions change (i.e. a legislative assembly), and also some means of enforcing its rules where enforcement is indicated. When the Socialist Party is strong enough to make such rules and enforce them, it will be strong enough to use the already existing machinery for this purpose.

E. CARNELL

THE CASE FOR SOCIALISM

Paddington Branch Draft Election Address

The following draft was produced in consequence of Paddington Branch's circulated criticism of the Address sent out by the Party in the N. Paddington by-election of Nov. '53

TO THE MEN AND WOMEN OF N. PADDINGTON

This is the fifth time that the Socialist Party of Great Britain has run an election campaign in N. Paddington since 1945. We are not concerned with arguing 'party politics' in the sense of seeking to get the members of *our* party into power and the others out. Our sole purpose is to urge you to understand and work for Socialism, which is the only solution to the social problems that face all of us today.

The S.P.G.B. is organised for one purpose alone—the establishment of Socialism. Although we are in opposition to the policies of all other parties, our case does not rest upon mere criticism of them. We have a positive alternative to the property system that exists today. Our aim is to convince you that this alternative (which we call Socialism) is both desirable and practicable.

WHAT LIFE IS LIKE TODAY

The way of life today is one of antagonisms: nation against nation, class against class—*man against man*. The means of production—land, factories, railways and so on—are owned by a minority. This means that the majority of people are compelled to work for wages or salaries in order to live.

This class division breeds a *clash of interests*. Employers are always seeking to get workers to produce more for less, while workers have to struggle to maintain or improve their conditions. This is the class struggle, and it is because of its harmful effects on every aspect of life that socialists seek to abolish class society.

The world is capable of producing an abundance of the good things of life. Yet millions go short. It is not people's needs that count, but what one can afford to buy. Further, the struggle between nations (representing capitalist class interests) over world markets, sources of raw materials, etc., leads finally to war. Of course, war is usually supposed to be fought for other things, but the securing of property can always be shown to be the real reason.

WHAT SOCIALISM WILL BE LIKE

When we speak of Socialism we mean an entirely new system of society that has not yet existed in any part of the world.

The socialist way of life is one in which everything that is in and on earth is to be held in common by the people of the earth. Everything will be produced *solely for use*—nothing will be for sale. Socialism means that each person will have access to what he or she needs, each determining his or her own needs.

A socialist outlook is not a nationalist outlook, but one that regards all men and women as equals. Socialism will bring all the people of the earth into co-operative harmony. When property relationships and trading have disappeared, nations as such will have disappeared, along with the armed forces and the rest of the state machinery. There will be no conflict of property interests to cause wars.

PRODUCTION FOR USE

Perhaps you think that 'production for use' applies today? True, people do use the goods and services that are produced, but that is not the primary motive for production. Things are made today to sell in order that the owners may make a profit. Consequently, a great deal that is sold is shoddy, useless and even harmful.

By contrast, under Socialism everything will be made as well as they can be for their intended purpose.

Think of the quantity of human labour that is wasted today. Much of the steel, oil, coal and textile output is solely for war purposes. Effort is frittered away on advertising campaigns, in purely financial dealings, and on frivolous luxuries. The latter do not give real satisfaction, and are only part of the act of "keeping up with the Jones's" in a world where competition and money-values prevail.

This will give you some idea of the enormous amount of Labour that will be at the disposal of socialist society. The dull routine, both at home and at work, with which we are so familiar will give place to occupations that are interesting and have variety.

NO BUYING OR SELLING

There will not be anything for sale under Socialism. No one will be able to sell,

because no one will want to buy what he is free to have. No buying or selling means no production for profit, and so money will not be needed and all the things that are necessary only to a money-based world will go.

Imagine the evils that Socialism will remove by making money unnecessary. People will no longer have to sell their self-respect for it. No one will need to steal what he can have freely.

People will behave towards each other in a co-operative manner and, without laws to break, there will be no prisons, warders, police or lawyers. Bribery and corruption will vanish along with servility and domination. Cash values will be replaced by *human* values.

HOW PEOPLE WILL WORK

With Socialism, each person will have full scope to give of his best, and he will be amply rewarded by the pleasure his work gives both to himself and others.

Since all people, in free association, will control their conditions of living, the aim will be to have as full and satisfying lives as possible. All human activity will be carried on under as pleasant conditions as can be devised, and occupations that are harmful to the doer will be abolished.

What is objectionable today is not work itself, but the kind of things we have to produce and the conditions under which we have to produce them. When things are made to sell in a mass market they have to be turned out as quickly and cheaply as possible, no matter the harmful effects that may result to the workers. Mass production means that work is split into its simplest component parts—and the ideal is that each worker shall make only one movement as frequently as possible.

Thus a variety of products is obtained (very few of which add anything to living) only at the cost of making work uninteresting. The strain of modern life—the overcrowded cities, the ceaseless hurry to save time (for what?)—all are symptoms of a disease that is inherent in capitalist society.

Socialism is an integrated society, which will have regard for people both as producers and consumers. The feeling of being a cog in a vast impersonal machine will disappear

in communities that are smaller and *designed for living*.

EQUALITY

People will not be divided into classes as they are today—some rich and most poor—because there will no longer be sections with privileges. All will stand to each other as social equals.

The position of women in society will be the same as that of men. The sexes will participate freely in the various occupations. Already the marriage institution is fast changing from the wife's economic dependence on the husband into a union of companionship. This form of marriage rests not merely upon the economic tie, but rather upon the need for affection, understanding and companionship that is denied people in their relationships with those outside the family. In socialist society the fulfilling of these human desires will be given full expression, not thwarted and confined within the limits of the family.

There will be no groups of people seeking power and privileges over other groups, i.e. no racial discrimination, no age, occupational or other antagonisms of interest. This does *not* mean that everyone will do exactly the same amount of work and have the same "rations". Each, according to his mental and physical energies, will contribute willingly to the production of what is needed. No longer will people have to worry about what tomorrow will bring forth; whether they will lose their job and go hungry, badly clothed or unwanted. In other words, there will be real security of living for all.

Since there will be no privileged classes, there will be no state power or governments to prevent some from encroaching upon the privileges of others. Social affairs of all kinds will be administered with the full participation of all for the mutual benefit of all. No governing body or leaders will be given power to wield over others. Social matters will be conducted in an organised fashion, but without "authorities".

WHAT STANDS IN THE WAY

Whilst you will almost certainly have many doubts about the details of the socialist way of life, we think you will look upon it as something desirable. The doubts and objections you have are probably along the lines that it is impossible "because of human nature". This is where we come in. Our sole purpose is to convince you that it is possible.

It is true that men behave selfishly, greedily, aggressively, and in other anti-social ways—in a society that sets man against man. But in some circumstances (a flood disaster, for example) they work with

untiring energy for a communal purpose.

Whether people act selfishly or unselfishly depends not on 'human nature' but on their conditions and ideas. Where property makes one man's loss another man's gain such emotions as greed and jealousy are found. Where things are held in common these emotions are absent because they have no purpose. Human nature is no barrier to Socialism; human ignorance is—but that can be overcome.

Do not accept the arguments of those who will say that Socialism is all very well for the future "but we must do something practical in the meantime". It is claimed that, since a vote for the Socialist Party would be a "wasted" vote, therefore electors should choose one of the larger parties as the lesser of two evils. The socialist, however, argues that when presented with the choice of two evils you should choose neither, but continue

to work for what you think is desirable.

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO

We have tried, in this short space, to give you an outline of what the Socialist Party stands for. We scarcely need add that we do not beg for your vote—we only ask you seriously to consider the ideas that we put forward.

The socialist approach is, above all, an integrated and dynamic approach, viewing society as a whole and not isolating ideas from activity. That is why we insist that it is necessary to change people's ideas in order to change the way we live today. This is the socialist revolution—the ideas and the action, forming a harmonious way of life in contrast to the antagonisms of today.

The choice before you is Capitalism, and a continuation of present evils—or Socialism and a life worth living.

HEREDITY AND ABILITY

Comrade Bott says that I deliberately misconstrued his remarks about leadership. This is what he said (Jan. p. 7): "If innate structural variations produce special abilities, applied to the brain this would mean innate variation in mental capabilities. Some individuals could be endowed with innately superior thought mechanisms. Anyone who believes this must be seriously disturbed by the Socialist case regarding leaders".

Leaving aside his introduction of the term "special abilities" (which courts misunderstanding, and was not used by me), I took his last sentence to imply that he thought a case for leaders could rest on differences of ability between men. I still take it to mean this, as I do not see why, otherwise, the Party's case against leaders should be disturbing to anyone who acknowledges that other implication is contained in his statement, or what other inference than mine could be drawn from it. If he did not mean that a case for leadership rests on differences of ability, why did he raise the question of leaders in connection with differences of ability? Will comrade Bott please explain what he did mean, and in what way I misconstrued it?

My point (to which comrade Bott refers) about the undesirability of not *assuming* a common knowledge of the Party position has nothing to do with the propriety of criticising views *expressed*. What I was averse to was the failure to interpret what is written in the light of that assumption of common ground, or to give benefit of doubt, where alternative

interpretations are possible. We cannot make that assumption where views expressly conflict with it. It was comrade Bott who implied (see above) that my views did not square with our position on leadership, and it was up to me to show that they do (and therefore that his don't).

Comrade Bott now implies that in my first reply to him I modified my original proposition. I did not and I do not: I repeated it, and I repeat it again here (at the end). Nor did I drop the word "abilities". I simply explained the sense in which I used it, in response to a suggestion that it could be misunderstood. I had deliberately left the word "abilities" open and uncrossed, relying on sense to establish its meaning, because definition was not practicable, and because any alternative I could think of (including "responses") presented the same difficulty. Whatever word is used, the sense of the matter is this: that what is innate is only potential, and becomes actual (as performance) only under environmental stimulus. I deemed this so obvious as not to need saying. The point here at issue was whether men vary in innate endowment as do other species. I have not changed the proposition selected by comrade Bott to deal with. I repeated its precise purport in pointing out that comrade Bott had not in fact dealt with it, and the need to answer still remains.

He agrees that unlike causes produce unlike effects, adds that I don't understand what this means, and then demonstrates with three

examples that he doesn't. His confusion pivots on his error that "every difference is not a cause". Every difference is a cause of something. How otherwise can he agree that unlike causes produce unlike effects?

His first example does not show that unlike causes (different initial velocities) produce like effects, but only that part of the effects is the same (terminal velocity). The unlike causes here do (as they must) produce unlike effects—the conversion of the additional velocity of one of the bodies into additional heat. There is not in this case, as he thinks, any "difference which is not a cause". The difference was a cause, of heat (they often are).

In his second example, the cause of the redistribution of the sugar is precisely the difference in vapour-pressure—a very queer example of a difference which is not a cause.

His third example, of the genetically abnormal stomach apparent in moist but not in dry atmosphere, shows that he means, not what he says (that every difference is not a cause), but only that every difference is not necessarily relevant to some part of the effects.

Example 4 (nautical). Six sailors, all saucy but otherwise all different, lie down and fall asleep. Out of their manifold differences comes a like recumbent somnolence.

I hope the reader now understands, with comrade Bott, that unlike causes may produce like effects even though we agree they can't.

Who argues like this doesn't know science form yellow clay. Science must make sense. We may of course talk sense without talking science, but it would hardly do to say therefore that science is not exactly sense: rather is it talking sense exactly. Anyway, if it isn't sense, Greek and Latin words or the numbering of paragraphs won't make it science. All that comrade Bott tells us is that all differences are not necessarily relevant to every effect, and any naive prole who has staggered his way through this "extraordinary confusion not known to science" must have asked himself why he tells us something that does not need saying and uses a column of scientific fancy dress to say it.

It is not in dispute that some innate differences between men may not be relevant to some differences of performance. It is not in dispute that human behaviour is socially conditioned. It is not claimed that the imbecile (or anyone) is an immutable bodily organisation. What is in dispute is whether inherited factors may have a bearing on who does or who doesn't need "interfering with and adjusting". What I dispute is comrade Bott's claim that innate differences have no bearing on differences of performance among

men. I hold that the examples he has given do not show, and that such examples cannot show, what innate differences may be decisive in (causes of) or irrelevant to (not causes of) what kind of performance, nor show what environmental influences may have compensated for what genetic differences. I hold that the matter has no bearing on the socialist attitude to leadership; that the strained and devious effort to exclude the human species from the innate variation which is the mechanism of organic evolution raises difficulties without solving any; that on the other hand we can, without any bobbing and weaving, accept that variation as enriching the possibilities (particularly relevant to primordial man) of the co-operative labour which is the spring of a new kind of evolution (history); that this attitude towards individuation is more in line with the historical necessity we call Socialism than atavistic notions of equality, and that these notions, with their new Idealism and new Absolute ("technique"), are only the old anthropomorphist ego of the machine-age barbarian ("I think therefore I am" translated "I make, therefore I am Creator") not yet purged from the socialist ideology whose evolution is socialism evolving.

Comrade Bott has not answered the objections raised, and he does not further the discussion (or resolve our probable cross-purposes) by repeating my views (about language, or the social inheritance of technique) as though in answer to me; nor by the carelessness which permits him to say in one breath that we think with words, and in the next that we think with tools (especially as in fact we think with our brains), or to say that the "limiting factor within the human body" is something outside it ("social inheritance of technique"), nor by foisting

on me views that run counter to all I have said (such as the silly view that social development is determined by the biological struggle for existence, when I have emphasised production as the agency of history at such length as surely to leave no one else in doubt about it).

It is a matter of taste what one feels about a charge of dishonesty in discussion, and as comrade Bott obviously does not share my taste there is no point in returning the charge. But he seems not yet to be aware that evasive action by throwing up a cloud of scientific dust is the wrong tactic in our outfit. The fact that some of us still drum on our chests when we've read another book, doesn't mean that our hands all brush the ground.

There are two or three questions to which comrade Bott owes an answer: the one in the second paragraph (in connection with which he should also say what are his differences on what he calls my naive treatment of the question of leadership), and the one relating to his original point of difference with me. He said (Jan. p.6): "I promise to deal, therefore, with only one statement, which appears in Evans' last paragraph, viz. 'The rich genetically determined variation in innate individual abilities cannot be dismissed without dismissing the basis of biological evolution'". If comrade Bott rejects natural selection, what other mode of biological evolution does he suggest? There was no answer in his first reply, and after being reminded there was none in his second. Blow away the dust and there it is—gorn.

F. EVANS

NOTE: This article should have appeared in the July 1953 issue of *FORUM*, but was mislaid. (Eds.)

SOCIALISTS AND THE RETREAT FROM REALITY

The philosophy on which Socialism is based is that of Marxian materialism. It is because materialism has to do with the observable, i.e. that which can be analysed, documented and shown to conform to certain laws, that the materialist conception is accepted as the only possible system suitable for the world of today and the future. By its application, Man sees a working law in what appears otherwise chaos.

Despite this, large numbers of people in the more 'advanced' industrialized countries see life as Khayyam saw it—as a door to which they find no key. This is not to say that they have consciously rejected the materialist view of life, but rather that they have failed to

understand it. They have long since thrown away the key handed down to them by the church fathers as being totally unfitted to unlock the problematical doors of their age. They stand now, suspended in a limbo of perplexity, shuffling and faltering: they are the bewildered conscripts of Capitalism becoming increasingly aware of a frightening shadow as they feel their world moving towards the pin-point of nihilism.

Faced with this 'octopodius' army that waves its multifronds abstractedly, each separate arm seeking its nourishment marked 'peace', 'work', 'leisure', and 'wages', the socialist must somehow make contact with the vital core which animates the whole.

If socialists are to hold up the retreat from reality they themselves must come to grips with reality. There are, at the moment, controversial views within the party; views which, according to some, appear to be frontal attacks on fundamental principles.

While we agree that Ideas cannot be divorced from environment, we are not too certain on the question of new attitudes arising among ourselves, resulting from inner changes taking place *within* the general environment of Capitalism. While we agree that the Idea is the skin of the environmental body, we cannot all agree that it must stretch in keeping with changes within that body. Is it enough to say that Capitalism remains the same? Does not its method of exploitation change? It is not more difficult to convince in the old-fashioned way, the modern wage slave, that he is indeed being exploited just as much as his forbears of the 18th century, and this despite our learned explanation on the falling rate of profit? Is not this difficulty the result of the innerchanges taking place within the broad field of capitalist exploitation?

Is not our attitude towards Religion rather archaic? Much understandable criticism has been levelled at Jarvis' articles on religion. It would be a tragedy indeed if the party developed its anti-religious propaganda at the expense of Socialism. R. Smith brings a sense of proportion along when he chides us on our attack against what are in some cases worthy and sensible sentiments found in certain religious philosophies. Socialists do not need to be guarded against religion, but we do need to guard ourselves against the possibility of creating one of our own. We must be careful that we do not cut our noses with an academic knife when we discuss religion with prospective members. Would it be a bad idea to get them in "souls an' all" and, through better acquaintance with socialist philosophy, convert them to 'full blooded' materialism?

Perhaps we are being rather foolishly pedantic when we refuse to 'violate' the D of P by even suggesting changing its Victorian phraseology. We look at the river and observe that it still flows in the same direction as when Marx was a student, but we do not pay sufficient attention to the change of currents underneath, *and it is the under currents that drag one down.*

Perhaps, if we take stock we may find that one of the major causes for the slowness of our progress lies not wholly in the strength of our class enemy or the apathy of the workers but in a 'stiffness' in versatility in ourselves. Perhaps, like Alice, we refuse to grow up even though we grow older.

W.BRAIN

PROBLEMS OF PROPAGANDA

4 Organisation

The purposes of organisation as far as the S.P.C.B. is concerned are, I suggest:

1. To gather and keep together socialists
2. To enable our ideas to be propagated
3. To afford a measure of, and a stimulus to, the growth of those ideas.

These purposes are not separable (except for analysis); nor are they without influence upon each other.

"Gathering" at present means, perhaps one or two members a week. There is a danger that we become reconciled to this intake, that we gear our organisation to take this number, and so preclude any substantial increase. The problem of integrating new members into the Party is one which deserves more attention than it gets now. It is deplorable how rare it is for anyone to get into the Party on anything less than a couple of years acquaintance with it. The number of our sympathisers is far too large in proportion to the number of our members, and we should take steps to correct this.

The bureaucratic and inconsiderate way in which members are enrolled in the Party tends to result in what may be called 'post-enrolment apathy', which may easily turn into despair. There have been nearly 6,000 members on our books since 1904, of which only 1,100 remain. Physical death has accounted for only some of the losses: death of enthusiasm for probably the greater part. It should be realised that it is part of the function of the Party to keep its members happy—to study their needs, to make them feel *wanted* by giving them tasks that afford satisfaction without draining off reserves of mental and physical energy.

At the present stage, our problem as a Party is to appear large enough to "count" in the scheme of things, and yet not so well-established as not to require help in its work. We make progress towards the former by concentrating our propaganda efforts, large meetings and election campaigns (in which we appear larger than life, as it were) and towards the latter by overcoming such difficulties as asking people to identify themselves with a small group.

In some mysterious way, the concentration of propaganda has come to be associated with the pernicious doctrine of selectivity. There is an easy way to distinguish the two. The selectivists think "We have come here

because we think *you* are the people." Those in favour of concentrated propaganda think "We have come here so that *you* will think we are the people."

* * *

Little need be said about the importance of organisation to the mechanics of propaganda. Except to point out that it means not only a certain degree of centralisation but also of individual responsibility. The Party itself counts for relatively little in propaganda—the unit of literature sales and meetings is normally the branch, and of writing and personal contact, the individual member. The fact that personal contact has played such a large part in our growth indicates that the Party and its branches are not so effective as the separate members who compose them.

We enrol people in the Party as a convenient way of registering the fact that they hold socialist views. But this line we draw between members and non-members loses all convenience if it is over-emphasised. It becomes instead a barrier which segregates.

The fuss and bother about selling *Forum* to non-members and about the subject-matter of Head Office Sunday meetings indicates that some members still think we shouldn't tell "all" to non-members, although they rationalise this belief by saying that it would "confuse" them. What a subtle form of insult this really is! How can members be so insensitive as not to realise that people desire above all else to be treated as human beings, as *equals* and not as intellectual inferiors?

We may become so used to thinking in terms of black and white (member and non-member) that we ignore greyness and fail to encourage the latter to become the former. It is "not done" to ask people to join the Party—and this attitude is justified by saying that when they are socialists "they will know what to do". Yet to what extent might it also be true that they will be socialists when they know what to do?

So reconciled have we become to the microscopic rate of growth of the Party that the "en masse" theory has ousted the "snowball". The party will always remain small, it is said, until people will "come over" as a mass movement. The respective merits of these

theories need not concern us here. The important thing is not to use "en masse" as a rationalisation of our lack of progress. The pressing need of the Party IS to become bigger. "En masses" tomorrow is a consoling theory, but no substitute for rolling the snowball today.

We must look upon the Party organisation as not so much a means of keeping non-socialists *outside* as of getting socialists *inside*. Quite a few of those outside unquestionably hold views very close to those of members. Yet the very fact of their not being included in the membership largely denies

them the environment of ideas which makes socialists. Once inside the Party (and, if possible, given a job to do) they would cease to be preoccupied with the minor differences they have with the Party case, since they would have a personal interest in promoting socialist ideas as a whole.

* * *

"QUESTIONS OF THE DAZED"

Answers to some of the questions asked at the 50th Conference

Question: What is the Party's attitude to Psychology, Monogamy, or Genetics?

Answer: What is the Party's attitude to ballistics, acoustics, eurythmics, or hieroglyphics? The only "ics" the Party has an attitude to is *Economics*. Party speakers who know Economics, can answer questions on Socialism from any source. If a Psychologist or Geneticist claims that his idea invalidates Socialism, let him prove it.

Question: Why not allow speakers to put forward contradictory ideas? If a chemist wants to find something, does he not experiment?

Answer: Analogy false. Chemistry is established as a Science as a result of experimentation. An experimenter who insists on the existence of Phlogiston, denying the proven basis of Chemistry, would finish up in the lunatic asylum.

Question: Seeing that Socialism is for everybody, why does the Declaration of Principles call on the working class to emancipate itself?

Answer: Because Society is split into two groups, whose actions are decided by their interests. The emancipation of the working class is opposed to the interests of the

capitalist class; it involves their extinction, which they do not want. The working class is driven to struggle by capitalism. It does not run out of capitalism as a prisoner does out of gaol.

Question: If you charge members who say that they disagree with the principles, will you not prevent all discussion of them?

Answer: No. Read your rule-book. Every member has the right to state his case to a conference. The delegates at the next annual delegate meeting or annual conference shall hear the case of the E.C. and the accused. The delegates shall submit their findings to a Party Poll (Rule 33).

Question: As the armed forces mentioned in point 6 now include things like Hydrogen bombs, would the founders of the Party have included this point if they had known about them?

Answer: We do not know what the founders would have done, if they had not done what they did. The Hydrogen bomb does not invalidate the Principle. On the contrary, the more efficient the weapon the greater the necessity to control it. The bomb has destroyed the anti-parliamentary case, confirming the Socialists.

"FESTINA LENTE"

PRINCIPLES & PRACTICE

The April *FORUM* was more than usually lively, but from the free-for-all emerges a serious call for clarification of some vital issues for the Party.

These issues, be it noted, are fortunately practically all on the tactical plane. None will challenge the statement that the aim of the S.P.G.B., especially at the present juncture, is, to use a homely but well understood phrase: "To Make Socialists". In spite of Turner's "economic bastard", with its duly numbered spiky hairs scattered over a bald pate of sentimentalism, there is surely no call for a frenzied cry from our comrade's head. Here it is necessary to remind ourselves that fifty years of experience has adequately

safeguarded the Party against the admission (or retention) of anyone definitely holding opinions not in conformity with its basic principles.

As to the making of Socialists: this involves propaganda, and here of course a very wide field is involved, carrying with it, throughout the history of the Party, widely divergent views—older comrades will know that such a superb propagandist as Anderson would have refused to admit Trade Unionists! Peckham branch narrowly missed advice to the E.C. to expel him on account of deviation from the then nominally accepted code of "morality" in its narrowest sense—Yes, we have travelled since, haven't we?

In summing up these four articles on problems of propaganda, the connection between the main themes can be noted.

1. A way of looking at propaganda as the cultivation of an attitude, stressing the positive side—analysis *plus* synthesis.

2. The desirability of speakers assuming agreement and not hostility on the part of their audiences.

3. The wider scope of Party literature, by ceasing to divide socialist ideas into propaganda and controversy, and

4. Appreciation of the fact that socialists are made *WITHIN* the Party.

S.R.P.

Correspondence and articles should be sent to **FORUM**, S.P.G.B., 52, Clapham High St., London, S.W. 4. Subscriptions 12 months, 7/6d, 6 months 3/9d. Cheques and P.O.'s should be made payable to:

E. Lake, S.P.G.B.

ITEMS FOR JULY ISSUE IN BY JUNE 8th

It is meet, right, and our bounden duty to criticise all efforts put out in the sincere desire to "make Socialists", but to raise these issues to vital principles (as at too many conferences) is a sad waste of time. For instance, the "violence" controversy seems to betray a misunderstanding of the role of the Party. It may come as a mild shock to some members to learn that I regard this question as beside the mark. It is far from certain, indeed unlikely, that the S.P.G.B. will effect the actual Social Revolution; future developments can only decide, as future developments can only allay the somewhat naive craving for a nice, neat blue-print of what a Socialist Regime "will be like". Meanwhile the unique cutting edge of S.P. propaganda must not be blunted by uncomradely strife.

I should like to add in a future number some remarks on the D of P, which is clearly involved on several points now raised, only saying here how heartily I concur with Evans (father and son) that clause 7, raised to a point of principle, STANDS.

REGINALD